

Europe

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The Gospel for France.

IT is now twenty-five years since the McAll Mission was commenced by the late Dr. McAll and Mrs. McAll, the first meeting being held by them on Wednesday, the 17th January, 1872, in the little Mission room, 103 Rue Julien Lacroix, at Belleville, Paris.

We need not refer in detail to the history of this work, how it rapidly grew in extent, the city being soon girdled, as it were, with stations, and then important halls being opened in the centre.

In the provinces calls were quickly made for the work to be extended to them, and in many cities and towns the Mission has been able to carry on its operations.

The undenominational character of the Mission, and its simple aim—that of preaching the Gospel to those who know it not—commend it to all true Christians; and thus the co-operation of all the evangelical Churches is assured. Many names might be cited of those who have been the firm friends and helpers of the work in France. Pastors Georges Fisch, Ernest Dhombres, Eugène

McAll Mission Booklets, No. 6.

Bersier, de Pressensé, stand out as those of old and much-valued friends now passed away ; the late Rev. T. Howard Gill, British Chaplain, was also a firm friend, and a member of the Paris Committee.

WHAT IS THE MISSION DOING TO-DAY?

is the question that may be asked. First let us repeat that the McAll Mission has for its unique object the bringing the Gospel to the people of France, and the people to the Gospel. It is a work of evangelisation. It is not a work of philanthropy, nor of patronage, nor of "*relèvement moral*." The motto of the Mission is, "We preach Christ crucified," and it seeks to use every means within its power to call men to repentance, and to bring before them the good tidings of salvation through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, the only Saviour of sinful men. With the Word of God in hand, its members seek to go among the people who are ignorant of even the letter of the Scriptures to teach them the way of eternal life.

We have in Paris fifteen Mission halls, and in the outskirts twelve more, making in all, twenty-seven stations worked from the centre. Then in forty-five towns we have fifty-five halls, so that the total number of stations is now eighty-two.

Our last annual report shows that during

the year we held 15,053 meetings for adults, and 6228 meetings for children and young people.

Our work includes Gospel meetings for adults, Bible-classes, Adult Sunday schools, Temperance meetings, Mothers' meetings, Prayer-meetings, Soldiers' meetings, Free Dispensaries, Children's Meetings and Sunday Schools, Christian Endeavour Societies, Preparation Classes, &c.

We have also Mission churches formed in some stations, into which the converts are gathered, while many of them join the existing Churches. One Church in Paris which had ceased to exist, had been entirely revived by means of the Mission, and is now most flourishing, being composed of working people. (It is under the direction of the Société Évangélique.)

Then we have our beautiful little Mission boat, *Le Bon Messager*, which goes on the rivers and canals carrying the glad tidings to the villages and hamlets so thickly scattered along their banks, and where we reach the industrious peasantry of France, the simple country folk, who are, alas, also being reached by the vile literature and the poison of absinthe, and yet who are so accessible to the Gospel.

It is aggressive Gospel work that we seek to carry on, and great has been the blessing.

WHAT HAS BEEN THE RESULT OF THESE
YEARS OF WORK?

In the first place it has been a message of peace brought by messengers of various countries to a people in sorrow and bereavement. But it has been far more. It has been the means, under God, of stirring up an interest in Gospel work among the Christians of France. It has helped to show them that the masses are not so far away from them as they had feared, and that they could set to work and take them the Gospel and have good measures of success in so doing. It has given many courage to follow the example set by Dr. McAll, so that now a "McAll meeting" is an accepted thing in France. As Pastor Théodore Monod says:—"The Mission Populaire has shown us how to reach our own people. It has opened a new field of labour to our ministers, and more especially to our laymen. It has made us more practical, more simple, more popular, and more hopeful. It has wedded us together in love and in labour; it has made our faith known and respected throughout the country; it has furnished an opportunity of bearing the glad tidings of salvation to thousands who would not have cared to enter a Church. . . . The Protestants think that the McAll Mission is an unalloyed good, a plant that the Heavenly Father has planted, and that is barely begin-

ning (let this be kept in view) to yield its appropriate fruit. . . . We think, in short, that if such a work as the McAll Mission did not exist, it should be set on foot without delay." These words were written after fifteen years of the Mission's history. Ten years later, M. Monod adds this : "Time will show, and has already begun to show, how far-reaching a movement he (Dr. McAll) has originated. I venture to think that the progress of evangelical truth in France—that progress which is now arousing such bitter opposition and calumny—is due, in a large measure, to the diffusion of the Gospel through the length and breadth of our land, by means of the McAll Mission" (Dec. 17, 1896).

The late Pastor Bersier not long before his death (and the last hours of his life were spent in one of our halls), wrote thus : "The Protestants of France are coming more and more to recognise the benefit of this work, and they would sustain it more generously if they were not themselves forced to make greater sacrifices than ever to make good the loss of those official subsidies which the State is gradually withdrawing from their churches as it has already withdrawn from their schools. So much the more urgent is our need of the help of our foreign brethren in the evangelisation of our vast country."

Again, the representative in France of the

Bible Society writes as follows in that Society's *Monthly Reporter*, "It is hardly possible to exaggerate the importance that blessed institution has for the evangelisation of the working classes all through France, as also the help it is to *our work* by recommending the reading of the Bible to people who never attend any place of worship." Many other such testimonies could be quoted did space permit. The Mission has thus been the means of bringing about a great change in the work of the Gospel in France. Now it is carried on with a boldness, a hopefulness, and a perseverance as never before.

What about results in conversion of souls, in lives transformed, in homes purified, in redeemed souls passing away in peace? That would take many pages to tell, even such cases as come to our knowledge, and we are sure that many receive blessing which the Great Day of revelation alone will declare.

We turn over our records and we cull here and there an incident, an illustration, showing that the Gospel is to-day in France the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth.

CONVERSION OF AN ANARCHIST.

A carpenter, Belgian by birth, living in Paris, had been drawn into the society of anarchists, and had become an ardent upholder of their

views ; so much so, that he was expelled from France for three years, and only allowed to return on condition of his remaining in Paris under strict police surveillance.

Some three years ago he was ill, and being in needy circumstances was glad to avail himself of our free dispensary at Grenelle. He was greatly benefited by the treatment he received there, but more than that, he heard the Gospel for the first time, and his heart was touched by the story of the love and power of the Lord Jesus, who was able to save to the uttermost all who came to Him. He trusted Him for the healing of his soul, and became thenceforward a new man. "Old things had passed away, and all things had become new" for him. He ceased to associate with his former companions, and joined the Baptist Church of the Rue St. Denis.

Some time after, he asked our president, M. Sautter, if he would use his influence with the authorities to have his position changed that he might be no longer under police surveillance, and that he might be free to live where he pleased. Accordingly, the necessary application was made to the Home Office, and a report was furnished by the Prefect of Police to the effect that F. was no longer to be considered a dangerous character, being entirely changed, and that there was now no reason why he should be watched by the police,

or compelled to remain in Paris. In short, he was granted full liberty, and all the rights that foreigners have in France.

The Sunday following the terrible outrage in the Chamber of Deputies in December, 1893, F. asked permission to say a few words at the evening meeting at Grenelle. He said that three years ago he should have highly approved of that crime, and might even himself have taken a part in it. But now, by the grace of God, he had completely changed in his views, and he felt compelled to give his testimony not only to the difference in his life, but also in his heart.

Formerly he had been miserable, for everything was wrong. In the morning when he awoke, it was with his heart filled with hatred against all classes. His master was no better than a robber, grinding his own work-people ; society was badly organised, it was a shame that poverty existed, and, in fact, there was nothing but wretchedness inside and outside.

Now when he began the day, it was with love in his heart to all men, rich and poor. He knew that poverty must exist, because the Lord Jesus said so, and he knew now that the cause of all the misery in the world was the sin in each human heart. Happiness does not consist in the riches of this world, but in the blessing of God. His one desire now was that all, rich and poor alike, should learn to know

and love the Lord Jesus, who is the only One who can do them good, and save them from their sins. There is the true remedy for all the miseries of this world.

F. went once to the notorious Salle Favié, where the anarchist meetings are held, and gave his testimony before his old comrades. Of course he was hissed and insulted, but he felt he must tell them of what the Lord had done for him. He now works at his trade, and does all he can in his spare time for his Lord and Master.

A YOUNG SOLDIER'S EXPERIENCE.

A young man, twenty-one years of age, was drawn for military service, and sent to a town on the frontier. There was no Protestant place of worship there, and no kind of religious life, so far as he could find. Coming from Paris, from his Church and Sunday-School Class and Christian Endeavour Society, he felt very lonely and sad on his first Sunday in barracks. He had no where to go, the only two respectable cafés in the place were retained for the use of the officers, and so he had to spend his time in pacing the streets and roads.

By the following Sunday, he had made friends with a tradesman, who allowed him the use of an empty room behind his shop. There he spent his second Sunday, with his

Bible and Sunday-school lessons, going over the subject he would have been taking had he been with his class in Paris. The following days his comrades asked him what he had done with himself those long hours of Sunday, for there is nothing more dreary than the daily life of a conscript in a Continental army, especially on a Sunday, when there is no drill to pass away the hours. He told them what he had found to occupy his time, and the following Sunday several of his companions joined him in the empty room behind the shop, and from that day forward he had a class of from eight to twelve, gathering with him round the Word of God.

Now who was this young soldier? Perhaps the son of a pastor, or a member of a Christian home, where he had been carefully trained like Timothy in the ways of God? A few years before, he was a lad running on the streets of Paris, like so many hundreds to-day, with no one to care for his soul. But he was picked up by one of our Mission schools, and there the Lord blessed him, so that to-day he is a faithful worker among his fellows. Is not this good fruit, and well worth gathering?

One never knows where the seed will fall. It is

A FAR-REACHING WORK.

Not long since we heard from a friend,

travelling in Italy, that one of the best colporteurs in the north of Italy had been converted in one of the halls in Paris, and had gone back to his own land to evangelise his countrymen.

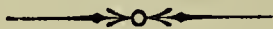
A German socialist was got hold of in Boulogne-sur-mer. He was brought to Christ, and now we hear of him as a useful worker in Germany, taking the blessing he had gained in France across the Rhine.

Our missionary at Ajaccio, in Corsica, was delighted to meet with a sailor on board a French man-of-war, who had been brought to a knowledge of the Gospel when at Lorient, attending the meetings there on board the mission boat, lent to us by the late Mr. Henry Cook. He had kept faithful amidst his most unfavourable surroundings, being probably the only Christian on board that vessel.

In distant country villages in Algiers, the pastors there have found truly Christian lives being lived by some who have heard the Gospel and been brought to the Saviour in a mission hall in Paris, or in some provincial station, and have thus carried the good news with them. The good seed scattered week by week is springing up and bearing precious fruit to the praise of God.

When we think of some 7000 children being weekly taught in our Sunday and Thursday schools, and when we see the young teachers,

trained in the Mission, who were themselves not long since entirely ignorant of the Gospel, and even of the letter of the Scriptures, we feel that the work given us to do is indeed a great one, and well worth all our efforts. Will not those who read these lines seek to do more than ever to give the Gospel to this people, that they may not drift into a worse state than the present, which is sad enough, but that they may have the knowledge of the Way of Life, and that they may be thus led to walk in it?



Copies, price 4d. per dozen, post free, may be obtained from Colonel FINCH WHITE, 112 St. Martin's Lane, London, W.C.; and from Miss COUSIN, 11 Greenhill Terrace, Edinburgh.

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LORIMER AND GILLIES, PRINTERS, EDINBURGH.